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Unclassified Summary of Public Positions on INF

Although the Vice President's tour ended yesterday, West European media continued to comment on statements he made in Paris and London. Moscow has not yet ceased its verbal assault on the Vice President. [redacted]

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UK After nearly five hours of debate, the governing body of the Church of England yesterday rejected a call that the UK abandon its nuclear arsenal. Archbishop of Canterbury Runcie strongly supported Thatcher's opposition to the proposal. The London Press Association reported yesterday that Thatcher had "agreed" with the Vice President that the West would accept a compromise at Geneva, adding that the Prime Minister's "shift" in defense policy "came after a 75-minute conversation with Mr. Bush." The Guardian editorialized that "Bush has learned a little on his European trek. He pointedly declined to use the words 'zero option' at all in the Guildhall yesterday." The paper also cited the lack of new "specific" US negotiating proposals. The Financial Times observed that the Vice President had "confirmed Washington's willingness to compromise." [redacted]

West Germany Die Welt (conservative) yesterday editorialized that the debate over INF "threatens to obscure the fact that our commitment to the Alliance and the basic orientation of our life are at stake." The paper sarcastically dismissed a comment by SPD official Erhard Eppler that there would be no "reasonable" INF agreement until Defense Secretary Weinberger resigned. According to Die Welt, Eppler has a "weakness for the Kremlin's style." Frankfurter Rundschau (left-center) remarked that Moscow was trying its best to "appear a serious partner in the INF negotiations," but added that if the USSR wished to "maintain this impression" it should stop the "propaganda exercises." The SPD weekly Vorwaerts disparaged the idea of an interim agreement at Geneva, claiming that such talk "amounts to an attempt to make people become used to missiles in small doses." [redacted]

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France Nouveau Journal (centrist) noted the Vice President "emphasized that his conversations with Mitterrand and Cheysson have strengthened the message received in West Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Italy." The conservative business daily Les Echos expressed concern that by cooperating too closely with the US, France was jeopardizing its traditional independence. [redacted]

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Italy The leftist La Repubblica reported that "George Bush acknowledged with satisfaction" that the dual key issue was not included in his talks with British officials. The Christian Democratic paper Il Popolo published a "centerfold" comparing Eastern and Western forces. Headlines included: "The USSR's Great Challenge For Supremacy" and "The West Discusses, But The USSR Deploys Masses of Missiles." Other major Italian papers continued to interpret the Vice President's statements in Paris and London as indications of US flexibility. [redacted]

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USSR TASS yesterday disputed the US claim that the Geneva talks were progressing in a serious and businesslike fashion, alleging that the negotiations were deadlocked as a result of US "bluff and hoodwinking." The Ministry of Defense paper Red Star charged that the Vice President "resorted to hocus pocus" when he announced President Reagan's summit invitation last week. [redacted]

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